

**REMARKS / ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1-17 have been canceled without prejudice.

Claims 18, 19 have been amended.

New claims 22-27 have been introduced.

The Examiner's attention is drawn to the amended claim 18. The Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections under 35 USC §102(b) over KO with regard to claim 18 for the following reasons.

1. It seems that in the Examiner's report, the language of claim 18 has not been correctly presented (please see p.4 of the report, last paragraph) and therefore the KO reference has not been applied to claim 18 as originally filed.
2. The cited patent to KO deals with the calibration of an e-VOA, where the attenuation of the e-VOA is initially set to zero (minimum attenuation) and then increased in a number of incremented steps until the calibration is done (please see KO, column 8 line 63 to column 9 line 42).

In contrast, claim 18 as amended deals with operating of the e-VOA in case of loss of signal, wherein the operation of the e-VOA is performed in a way opposite to that of KO, and typically opposite to any other known prior art, namely:

if the signal is lost, the attenuation of the e-VOA is set to a substantially maximum attenuation (MaxAtt) (instead of a traditional way of setting the attenuation to a minimum), followed by modulating the attenuation of the eVOA by decreasing and increasing the eVOA attenuation in finite steps until the optical power is detected above the LOS power threshold or the maximum attenuation (MaxAtt) is reached, i.e. operating the e-VOA in a snooping mode.

Clearly, KO does not provide such mode of operating the e-VOA.

Thus, the Applicant believes that the Examiner's rejections over 102 (b) KO with regard to claim 18 have been overcome, and claim 18 as amended should be allowable.

Also a typo identified by the Examiner in claim 18 has been corrected by appropriate amendments.

Claims 19-22 depend on the amended claim 18 and introduce further limitations, and therefore amended claims 19-22 should be allowable.

Claims 23-27 are system claims, whose scope is similar to that of respective method claims 18-22.

Thus, all requisitions raise by the Examiner have been addressed.

An early allowance of this application is courteously requested.

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